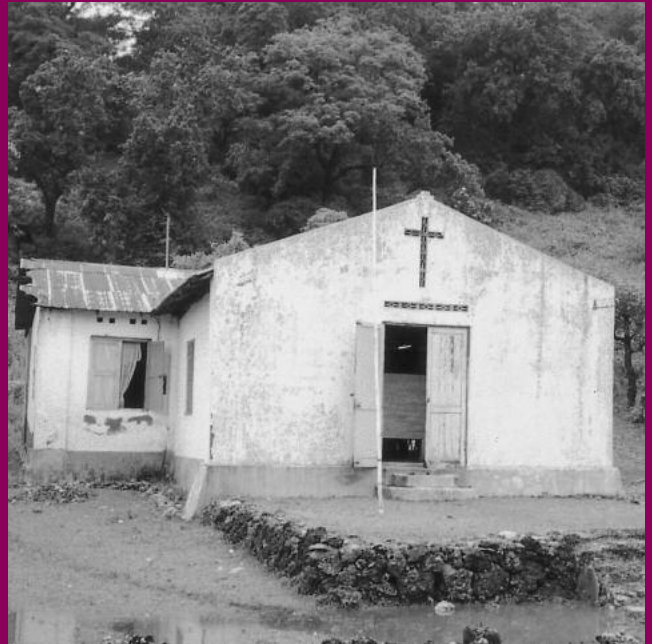


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*Christian Pilgrim Church –
Ebenhaezer, Timor, Indonesia*



By J. De Jong



Daily Renewal

The pull of extremes

The church has a constant struggle to maintain a sound perspective on the truths of Scripture in opposition to extreme positions which distort its truth. This applies in all areas of doctrine, but finds particular expression today in the doctrine of the way and order of salvation. On the one hand, there is a danger of *fatalism* and *automatism*: accepting the existence and power of sin as an unchangeable reality in the Christian life. On the other hand lies the danger of *perfectionism* in its various forms: promoting the possibility of perfection in some form in this life and on this side of the grave.

The prevailing force of a life-choking *fatalism* was common among the more so-called experiential branches of Reformed life in the early part of this century, and still lives among the more radical of these groups today. If the minister had to admonish someone about a specific sin, say the sin against the seventh commandment, the person would say: this was the old Adam. The implication was clear: this was a sin that you really could not prevent. These things happen because we still have an “old Adam,” and that seems to be some powerful force we have to live with, but all too often cannot do much about.

A related danger in Reformed circles is called *automatism*. Automatism reflects a casual and superficial acceptance of the teaching and ministry of the church, without a worked out awareness of its meaning. People live under the assumption that just by being in the church and sharing its sacraments, one is saved. In this variant, a good deal of prominence can also be given to the “old Adam.” A real change of life is not the most crucial factor of faith in this point of view. The most important factor of faith is that you are baptized and regularly attend church.

On the other side of these extremes we face the danger of *perfectionism*. Given the growing avalanche of evangelical literature that makes up our reading and study schedules, I would guess that we face an equally prominent danger here. The accent in much of this literature falls on the experience of salvation, holiness and the presence of God. While there may not be an overt defence of a second blessing over and above the gift of faith and the work of the ministry of the church, that is, the working of the Spirit in granting special gifts, there is a strong focus on sanctification, daily renewal, and the marks of holiness in the Christian life.

Some authors give this new birth a considerable and even exaggerated focus.¹ The old nature is pictured as being dead and buried. The new nature then becomes the only nature the Christian has to deal with. To be sure, there

may be lapses because of remaining imperfections. But the overriding presence of the new nature means that now the Christian is in a position that he is able not to sin, indeed, not to sin *at all*, even if only for short time periods. Thus from being “not able not to sin,” (after the fall) he now becomes “able not to sin” and this becomes an essential step to the last state that comes with the perfection: “not able to sin.”

Simple formulae are sometimes helpful, but they also easily open the door to misunderstandings. Let’s have a closer look at the letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans to see what is meant by the death of the old nature, the rising of the new, and what implication this has for the Christian life.

Dying to sin in Christ

In Romans 6:5ff Paul clearly speaks of the old nature as that which has died, (past tense). The inference is that the gospel did bring about a change in the life of the believers in Rome. Through faith in Christ, they renounced the world and its pleasures and became followers and citizens of a heavenly kingdom. Paul highlights the moment of baptism. Having made their confession of faith, the believers were baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. As believers they were buried with Christ by baptism into death, and were raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

Now the flow of the argument in Romans 6 seems to indicate that the death to sin is clearly a past event, since all the words used by Paul fall in the past tense.² In verse 5 Paul speaks of the believers as “having been united with him [Christ] in a death like his,” – pointing to a past action.³ And in verse 6 he says that “our old self that was crucified with him [Christ]” – a past event. In verse 8 he says: “If we have died with Christ” – again referring to the past. And the conclusion of the passage drives home these past tenses: we must consider ourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. All the weight seems to fall on past actions, with the result that the old nature is done and over with.

However, a number of things must be remembered here. First, being “dead to sin” (verse 11) and stating that the one who “has died is freed from sin” (verse 7) means that the sting of sin, that is, the punishment of the law is no longer applied to us. It does not mean that we automatically stop sinning, or even that we can begin to stop all sinning in this life. It means that the *curse* of sin is taken away from us through Christ, and that the debt owing because of sin has been paid for us by Christ. His “dying to sin” is really the payment for sin which puts an end to

sin's power, that is, sin's right to exact further payment and retribution from us.⁴

Secondly, we should not think of this past action as completed in the sense of being finished in our lives. To be sure, in Christ the payment for sin is complete, and in Him we may find ourselves before God in a state of innocence through faith in His blood. That is what is sealed to us in baptism! But in the life of the believer the death of the old nature is something that must be effected day by day. That which has been sealed in Christ comes to fruition in the life of His child in a gradual process, through daily appropriation of His promises by faith.

Thirdly, there is a real beginning of sanctification in the life of the believer, and the past tenses mentioned above point to this beginning. They are strictly past tenses only in the sense that they point to what Christ has done for us on the cross in paying our debt, and in acquiring a perfect and complete salvation for us through His death and resurrection. However, these tenses are not complete (i.e. in the past) when it comes to the application of Christ's blessings in our lives. Here Christ makes a *perfect* beginning through His Spirit; yet it remains a *beginning*.⁵ What begins as a perfect work is incomplete in this sense that it must be brought to completion through daily repentance and renewal, a completion which only becomes manifest at the day of Christ's return.

That is why the apostle couples to his past tenses a number of *future* tenses as well. In verse 5 he says that we shall certainly be united with him [Christ] in a resurrection like his." This begins in this life, but only comes to its culmination at the day of Christ's return, when all the saints will be made conformable in their bodies to His glorious body. And in verse 8 Paul says: ". . . we know we will also live with him [Christ]" – again referring to a future reality, which begins in the life of the believer today, in this life.

Therefore we should not think that we now are in a position that we are "able not to sin" in the sense of being able not to sin *at all*. To be sure, as Paul says, (verse 14) "sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." But what does he mean? He means that the force of the curse with its deadening impact on the conscience and its instilling of fear, guilt and dread is gone. The bondage of sin, our slavery to its power of punishment and exaction has been taken away! And by virtue of that fact, we must expend every effort to crucify the old nature, resist sin, and live godly lives.

Let's not deny real progress in the Christian life. But let no one say: sin no longer has dominion over us, therefore we are able not to sin *at all* – even if we often fail to reach this goal. For then we assert more than is permissible, and so can cause untold harm among many who have an abiding struggle with remaining sins and weaknesses. We are in danger of creating two levels of Christians, the successful and the failures. We do have the power to *resist* sin, and resistance will have its good effect. But resisters are in the *battle*, and do not presume to suggest that the battle is over. We must still deal with an old nature every day! Yet we can do so with confidence because the sure hope and assurance of victory is given to us in Christ's work on our behalf.

Paul's struggle

A confirmation of this position is given in the next chapter, Romans 7. Some of those who suggest that Paul's



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meaning in Romans 6 is that the old nature no longer exists find a novel way of reading this chapter, too. They suggest that the apostle who speaks in Romans 7:22ff is the apostle before his conversion, or at an elementary (lower) stage of his conversion.⁶ Thus the struggle that Paul alludes to represents his struggle before conversion, rather than after it. Once one is renewed fully in the Spirit, the whole sense of conflict as pictured by Paul is regarded as a thing of the past.

Paul's position in Romans 7 is that he still has an ongoing struggle with sin, see verse 14ff. The power of the old nature is such that it continually rises up as an unending fountain of evil thoughts and desires. His intention is also not to totally dissociate himself from this fountain, as if it is only "another self," the old Adam, so that he too might have said: "Oh well, that is just my old Adam, not really me." It is the old Adam indeed, but he feels it close to his heart and life! It is a daily grief for him! He says: "I do not understand my own actions, (15). For I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate." Then he paints a picture of struggle which is vivid and raging at that. There is no indication that the old nature has died and been buried, or that it no longer exists as a ruinous fountain in his life. On the contrary! He must contend with it every day, and he even admits that he is carnal, sold under sin, (7:14).

Here we have a frank admission that also in the state of regeneration and grace we are still not able not stop sin's power entirely from working its damage in our lives. To be sure, we can resist sin, and we will even have times when sin's power is held in check, and we experience spiritual growth and a weakening of sin's hold. But one can never

say: now I am in a position that I am able not to sin *at all*.

In point of fact it is just not possible, and we should not develop a mentality coloured by a methodism and moralism that suggests it is possible to live entirely without sin in this life. This does not accord with Paul's own cry in Romans 7:24: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" His plaintive cry represents the appeal of a man lost in himself! To be sure, there is progress in Christian living. But there will always be abiding weaknesses, and the body of flesh will not cease its incessant manifestations of evil and pollution until the day we die.⁷ What in principle is promised and administered to us in baptism solely of grace finds its full fruit and completion only at the end of our life on earth.

Faith's rule

All this is not meant to put us in a state of discouragement or distress concerning our position before God. To be sure, when we look to ourselves we can sometimes despair of the progress we make! All too often it seems to be more regress than progress! But the dangers of both the extremes mentioned above have a common root: that we look more to ourselves than to Christ who has promised His blessings to us. Looking to Christ helps us escape the pull of false dilemmas!

In Christ, we can avoid fatalism and automatism. There *is* a change in the Christian life, and despite disappointments, and an increasing knowledge of our sinful nature, there *is* progress in sanctification. It is *not* a partial change, or a haphazard start on the track of a new obedience. It is a *genuine* beginning, which includes in Christ the death of the old nature and the birth of the new.

At the same time, we avoid the danger of perfectionism. Even in our best moments life is clouded by the ongoing presence of the old nature which must be put to death daily. Yet we can be victorious in Christ, by appropriating His victory every day, through faith. In Him we share in principle (legally) what we hope to gain in fullness (actually) at the last day.

Faith's rule is simple: We need to look to Christ! We always need to come back to the means of grace instituted in the church, and use them with a living and sincere faith. Only then can we grow as members in Christ and so as members of one another. Then even in the deepest struggle we can say with the apostle: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (verse 25). In Him there is always progress, because He leads all things to the advance of His grace and glory in the lives of His children.

¹A good representative here is Watchman Nee, the Chinese evangelist who has been the subject of much discussion in the brotherhood in Holland, cf. W. Nee, *The Spiritual Man* Vol I, (Christian fellowship Publishers, New York, 1968), 79ff.

²The tense in verses 3 and 4 is the Greek aorist, pointing to a punctiliar action.

³Literally the text says: "having become one plant with Him [Christ] in the likeness of his death . . ."

⁴So S. Greijdanus, in the commentary on the Romans, (Bottenburg, Amsterdam, 1933) under 6:7 (my translation): "And thus it (i.e. sin, JDJ) lost all right upon the believers, and the bond to it was for them fully broken, *legally*, so that God on account of it no longer needs to condemn them, but may free them from it: it is paid for," 299-300, (emphasis mine).

⁵The aorists are also ingressive, marking a beginning.

⁶So W. Nee, *op. cit.*, 81-82

⁷Hence Lord's Day 16 speaks about our physical death as a dying to sin in the complete sense.

What's inside?

Happy Birthday, Canada! On July 1, we celebrate 130 years of Confederation. Somehow Canada holds together. Will it stay together? The outcome of the recent federal election demonstrates clearly the different views putting Confederation under stress. The once mighty Progressive Conservative Party has stepped back from the edge of oblivion to the status of an Atlantic rump. The separatists still dominate in Quebec. Reform largely took the Western provinces. The New Democratic Party has a sprinkling of seats from coast to coast to coast. The still-ruling Liberals, having swept Ontario, have two-thirds of their power base in one province. We have witnessed the Balkanization of Canada. Question Period in the House should be lively. It's a good thing Canadians do not take themselves too seriously. Otherwise, we'd be headed for trouble. One of our resident historians, Mr. James Dykstra, writes about Canada. He does so with a smile and a wink. We hope it will make you smile too.

Rev. Pol takes us to Timor, Indonesia.

In addition, you will find some of the regular columns. We thank our regular contributors for the fine and faithful work.

GvP

By P.G. Feenstra

Meditating on the Lord's ways

*I will meditate on all thy
work and muse on thy mighty deeds.*

Psalm 77:12

Do you take the time to meditate? Meditating should play a major role in our Christian walk. In contrast to other religions, such as the New Age Movement, Hinduism and Buddhism, believers do not concentrate on themselves. The Lord, His law, His testimonies, statutes, precepts, the splendor of His majesty and His mighty deeds are the subject of our meditation. Several Psalms bring that to light. Here are a few examples:

Psalm 1:1,2 – *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.”*

Psalm 19:14 – *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”*

Psalm 63:5,6 – *“. . . my mouth praises thee with joyful lips, when I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night.”*

Psalm 119:48,97,99 – *“I revere thy commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on thy statutes . . . Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day . . . I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.”*

In Psalm 77 meditation is a key concept. Asaph communes with his heart in the night; he meditates and searches his spirit.

Asaph is comforted in His present circumstances by contemplating God's deeds for His people in the past. He says, *“I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate on all thy works and muse on thy mighty deeds.”*

Taking the time to meditate on God's mighty deeds brings us closer to the Lord in our personal life and in our understanding of the Lord's ways with

His people. When the future looks bleak and dismal the deeds of the Lord reveal that He will open a way. His work will go on! His steadfast love never ceases and His promises will not come to an end.


One thing Asaph meditates on in this psalm is the footsteps of the Lord through history. *“Thy way was through the sea, thy path through the great waters; yet thy footprints were unseen”* (verse 20). Asaph sings about matters which happened a long time ago as if he was right there. He meditates on what happened when Israel passed through the Red Sea, *“When the waters saw thee, O God, when the waters saw thee, they were afraid, yea, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; thy arrows flashed on every side. The crash of thy thunder was in the whirlwind; thy lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.”* The forces of nature were brought into motion as the Lord appeared in power and majesty. Those were His footsteps.

The Lord performs a miracle at the Red Sea. He opens an unusual path for His people. He divides the waters and creates a dry path in the middle of the sea. *“Thy way was through the sea, thy path through the great waters”*

(verse 19). The Lord makes a path where you would not expect it. All roads go no further than the sea unless a bridge or a causeway is built across it. But the Lord builds a path *through* the sea. He does what no human being can accomplish.

When we meditate on the Lord's deeds we learn that the Lord always goes before His people. Meditating on the wondrous deeds of God has as consequence that we follow His footsteps. The apostle Peter writes in this regard, *“For one is approved if, mindful of God he endures pain while suffering unjustly . . . For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps”* (1 Peter 2:19,21).

With the Word of the Lord as a lamp unto our feet and a guide on our path we can follow the footprints of the Lord. Trusting in the Lord we do not walk ahead of Him or beside Him but we follow. And if the road gets rough, He picks us up with His mighty arms and carries us!

. . . You and I are not too busy to meditate on these ways of the Lord, are we? 

OUR COVER

**A Visit to Timor
“Gereja Masehi
Musyafir –
Ebenhaezer”
where Yonson
and Edwer
Dethan, now
students
in Hamilton,
come from.**



Canada, the musical

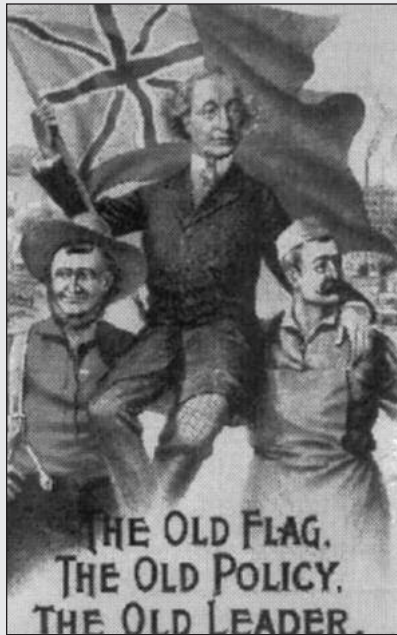
By James Dykstra

I have seen the emperors in their nakedness and the sight was not inspiring.
- Otto von Bismarck

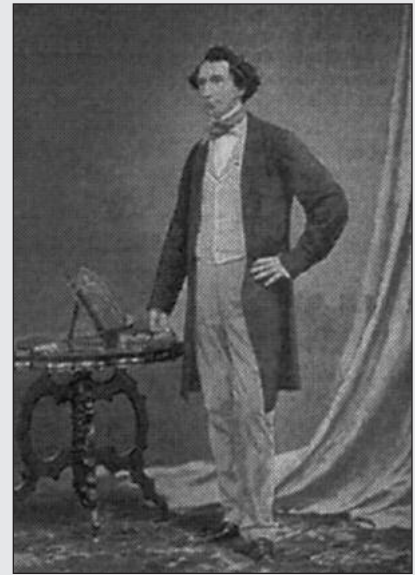
Their names leap out from the pages; Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Robert the Bruce, Elizabeth I, William of Orange, George Washington, Napoleon, Winston Churchill, or Charles De Gaulle. These are names that inspire the soul and fire the imagination for these are people who in small ways and great changed the course of history. The historian delights in studying these people for they inspire him. These individuals are the stuff of epic poems and ballads sung by minstrels in town squares. These people provide a thrill to the historian because they personify greatness.

Yet to study Canadian history is an entirely different affair. There are no epic poems recounting great deeds, nor ballads sung of the single-handed defeat of the enemy. Somehow it seems that Canadian historians have taken the men and women who shaped Canada and revealed their flaws. Our great figures appear smaller than life. They are blemished and often badly so. They are not the stuff of legends, but would fit better in a comic musical. When you meet these figures, you are sometimes uncertain whether to laugh or cry. These are small men involved in big projects with unpredictable results.

If this judgment seems harsh, look at the people who have shaped our history. Many have heard of the Battle of Queenston Heights during the War of 1812. The Americans had invaded and captured the Heights from British forces. The gallant Issac Brock, the very model of a modern major-general, led his British troops up the front of the hill to recapture the strategic position from the American soldiers. Out in the open and leading his forces onwards, the noble General Brock wore the distinctive and easily identifiable uniform of a general. The band running diagonally across his uniform conveniently marked out where his heart was located for the



Macdonald Campaign Poster



Sir John A. Macdonald

benefit of any American who cared to know. Predictably, Brock was dead within minutes. Canadians have chosen to name a university after this suicidal general. His successor at the battle, a wiser and less gallant General Sheaffe, successfully stole around the back of the Heights and recaptured them. In predictable Canadian fashion, there is no Sheaffe University.

In 1837, the demagogue William Lyon Mackenzie, publisher and grandfather to a prime minister, led a rowdy band of misfits in what may have been the most comic rebellion in any nation. His band of poorly armed townspeople, 500 strong, started out from a tavern on Younge Street outside of Toronto. They were soon met by a badly outnumbered sheriff's posse of only 12 men. The sheriff's men did what they could, taking a single shot at the rebels, then turning tail to flee for their lives. The rebels were initially a little braver.

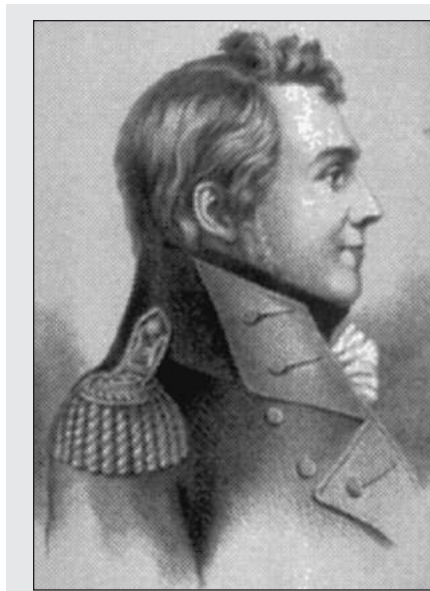
Those in the front who were armed with guns, rather than the more prevalent farm implements, fired at the fleeing sheriff's posse. In order to give those behind them a clear shot after they emptied their rifles, the first row of men bent down on their knees so that those behind could shoot over their heads. The men in the far back heard the noise of gun fire, and saw the hats of the men in front disappear as they bent down on their knees. Since those in the back couldn't see what happened in the front, it was assumed that the hats had disappeared because the front row of men had been killed. Within minutes, panic set in and this brave band of 500 was seen fleeing down Younge Street in the opposite direction from their enemy. This odd battle, for all intents, ended the Upper Canadian Rebellion of 1837.

The Fathers of Confederation make a strange group of men as well. The most prominent figure, Sir John A. Mac-

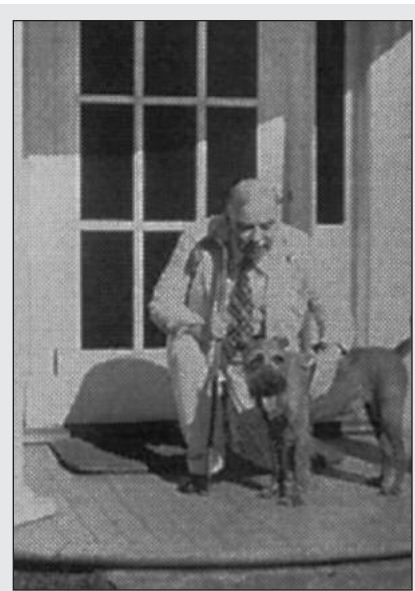
donald, is well-known for his assertion that he did his best thinking when he was drunk. This bold description of his political capabilities did not stop him from being re-elected repeatedly. Yet, Sir John A. was not the only oddball in the group. A man born as William Alexander Smith almost single-handedly steered the colony of British Columbia into Confederation. He became the province's second premier, but none of this was done before spending time in California where the well-travelled Smith had his name legally changed to Amor De Cosmos, lover of the universe.

The most colorful of Canadian figures would have to be William Lyon Mackenzie King, the man who steered Canada through World War II. The Americans had Roosevelt, and the British had Churchill. We had a man who consulted with his dead mother with the aid of mediums, and talked matters over with his dog who habitually sat on the mantle, not a bad place for a stuffed animal. The truly odd part about King is not so much his bizarre behaviour, but that it didn't seem to bother anybody. Everyone in his hometown knew about his eccentricities, but ignored them since "that was just King." Despite his oddness, King was prime minister longer than anyone else in Canadian history.

As comforting as it might be to believe that our leaders have become normal, we'd be fooling ourselves. One need only think of Pierre Trudeau, the prime minister who went on record as not knowing where Biafra was just after Nigeria, in a widely reported move, had crushed an insurrection in the region. This same man is well remembered for telling a Saskatchewan boy, and later a Member of Parliament as



Isaac Brock



W.L. Mackenzie King and Pat

well, where he'd kick them if they didn't stop bothering him.

With people like this leading the nation it makes one wonder how Canada has survived. The nation is one of the most beautiful on the planet, one that lends perspective to what it means to be human. From the open seas of the Maritimes, to the dense, dark forest of northern Ontario, to the apparently unending Prairies of Saskatchewan, clear to the imposing mountains of the West Coast, one is always left with a geography that reminds you of just how small you truly are. Yet this truly remarkable land blunders along from crisis to crisis, with the uncomprehending led by the unable. The mythical figures of American or British history are lacking, and that is truly humbling. For the nation of Cana-

da has reached a peculiar kind of greatness, yet not by any magic wrought by noble leaders nor intrepid citizens.

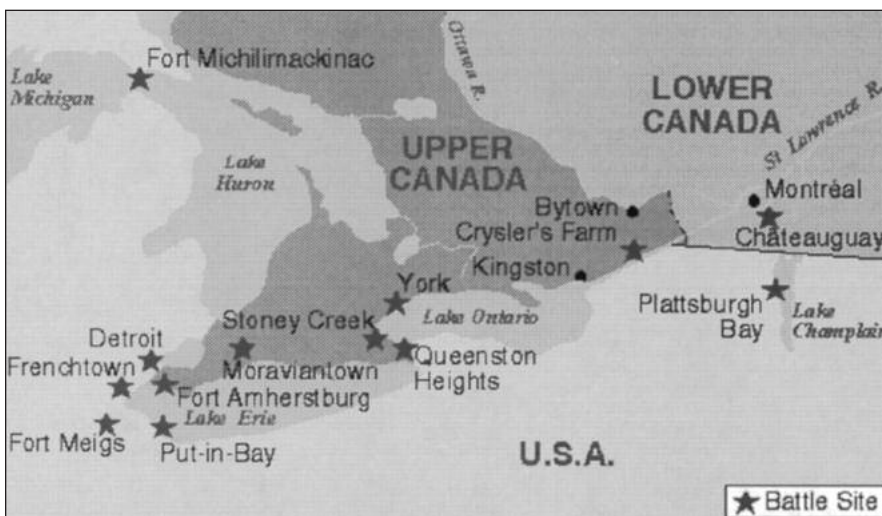
Canada's survival, and especially her prosperity, can only be attributed to God. Though historians will show the leaders of Canada in their nakedness, with their warts, blemishes, and all, the sight is actually inspiring for it makes one see all the more clearly just what a wonderful thing we have been given by a gracious God. The true north does not remain strong and free by the might of princes, but by the tiny acts of comic book-like characters propped up a powerful God.

On the so-called birthday of our country, it is comforting to remember that despite the problems with bilingualism, separatism and regionalism, a disloyal Loyal opposition, gay rights, abortion, unemployment, the GST, or the latest native blockade, Canada merrily blunders onward, led by people who seem unable to put their differences aside long enough to get serious about solving the problems. Still, the nation remains prosperous by any standard, freedom of speech is taken for granted, and the right to worship our God is unchallenged. Among the nations of the earth, few have the blessing that we do.

God keep our land, glorious and free.

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James Dykstra delves into the wonders of Canadian history while studying at the University of Alberta.



War of 1812

A visit to Timor, Indonesia

By A.J. Pol

The "Musyafir" churches

In a previous article I gave information about the *Reformed Churches in Indonesia* located in the province of *Nusa Tenggara Timur* (=NTT), Indonesia. My visit to Indonesia not only involved a month of teaching at their Reformed Theological School in Wai Marangu, on the island of Sumba. It also included a trip to the island of Timor. There I stayed with a couple that many older members of the Canadian Reformed Churches in eastern Canada will remember: Rev. and Mrs. H. Knigge. The Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto sent him and his family to the island of Irian Jaya, Indonesia, supporting them from 1960 to 1976. After repatriating to the Netherlands, Rev. Knigge served the Reformed Churches of Langeslag and of Daarlerveen. In 1992 he accepted an appointment to become a missionary teacher in the midst of the *Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir (NTT)*, (= the Christian Pilgrim Churches). His task is to give Reformed guidance and instruction to those churches. He focuses on the church councils and in particular on a group of about ten young men who have received their theological training at the Reformed Theological School in Wai Marangu. A few are ministers. The others are still at work as evangelists. Two have come to the Theological College in Hamilton for further training. One of them, Yonson Dethan, hopes to graduate with a M.Div. degree this year. His brother, Edwer, is now in his first year of studies.

Fruitful contact

The "Musyafir" churches first came to know the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (NTT) in 1988. Rev. Fangidae, a minister of the "Musyafir" churches, happened to meet Rev. Klamer, who at that time was serving as a missionary teacher from the Netherlands for the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (NTT). This led to an invitation for ministers and other officebearers of the "Musyafir" churches to come to Sumba for a con-



Rev. and Mrs. H. Knigge, Rev. Melchi Bulan and evangelist Yahya Teti

ference held at the Reformed Theological School. Since these churches have no Theological School of their own, they asked if they could send young men to Sumba for training. This request was received positively and as a result more than ten young men from the "Musyafir" churches have studied there in the intervening years.

An important development

The "Musyafir" churches have a background in which both Calvinistic and Evangelical influences play a role. In 1991 their Synod decided that the Reformed confessions and church polity should form the basis for the life of the churches. This decision was reconfirmed at a Synod held in 1992, when they officially adopted the three Forms of Unity as the expression of their faith and adopted the Reformed Church Order to regulate the life of the churches. They were subsequently registered with the Indonesian government on that basis. This was a significant decision. Rev. Siagian, at that time head of the Provincial Department of Religion, highlighted this in a speech that I heard



Rev. Eli Fangidae

him give in Kupang in 1993. He emphasized that this lays upon the officebearers the obligation of teaching and living in conformity with the Reformed confessions that have been chosen. It also lays upon the church members the obligation of holding their own leaders responsible for adhering to those confessions and admonishing them if they do not. (Just imagine a government official saying this to us in our country!)

Help

The decision of the Synod of 1992 to embrace the Reformed confessions and Church Order did not mean that automatically all officebearers or church members knew how to implement that in practice. Since there was much to learn about Reformed doctrine and church polity, an appeal had already been made



Seminar in the Reformed Church of Vupang – March 3, 1997

a year earlier to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to send a minister to help them. It was this decision that led to the appointment of Rev. Knigge in 1992 by the Deputies of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad to go to Timor. Since arriving there he has been active in visiting churches, teaching courses and giving seminars in a variety of locations.

Struggle

In the intervening years, tensions within the “Musyafir” churches arose and increased. A large group of people were inclined to move the federation back in an Evangelical or even Pentecostal direction. They also wanted to return to the hierarchical form of church government they were used to in the past. At a synod held in December, 1995, they managed to gain a majority of votes to abandon the Reformed confessions and church order. However nine churches refused to accept this decision. In April of 1996 they held another synod, rejecting the unreformed direction chosen by the synod of December 1995 and reaffirming their intent to continue with the Reformed confessions and church order. Because they were already registered on this basis with the Indonesian government, they have retained their name as *Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir (NTT)*, whereas the other group of churches has had to choose another name. The “Musyafir” churches suffered from intimidation and even physical violence from the other group. But things have quieted down now, and the work of consolidating the churches and building them up again can now be resumed.

Further contacts

The relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (NTT) have de-

veloped into a sister church relationship. Rev. Fangidae has also introduced the “Musyafir” churches to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia at a recent synod. The “Musyafir” churches have also already participated in the International Conference of Reformed Churches with the status of “observer” and hope to be able to become full members in the future. They certainly need all the encouragement and support they can get to grow in the faith, holding steadfastly to it in the context of a plurality of churches and as a small minority in a country that is predominantly Islamic.

Mutual encouragement

It was heartening to meet students of mine whom I had taught in Sumba years ago but who are now at work in the “Musyafir” churches. They know what they confess and are strongly motivated. But they are still young and face many challenges. It was also good to be able to meet some of the ministers and other officebearers of those churches.

On March 3, 1997, at the invitation of the Reformed Church of Kupang (one of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia - NTT), I led a seminar on the role of the Reformed confessions in the church. It was attended by members of the “Musyafir” churches and of the Reformed Church of Kupang. They will need more discussions on topics of common concern in the future to strengthen one another and to grow together.

It was a privilege to visit brothers and sisters in the Lord in Indonesia. The bonds we have with them are precious: paid for with the blood of Jesus Christ. May He continue to be their source of strength and joy, enabling them to reach out to others in His Name!

Rev. A.J. Pol is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church, Guelph, ON. 

Timor Fund

A notice from the Committee to investigate the Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir (GGMM) on Timor.

The consistory of the Canadian Reformed church of Burlington South appointed a committee to investigate the Musyafir churches on Timor to see whether we could seek contact with and possibly be of help to these churches in the future. (Two former members of these churches, Yonson and Edwer Dethan are attending our Theological College.) The Committee investigated and concluded that at this time we should not pursue an active role via classis and synod because the deputies of the GKN, our Dutch sister churches, are working towards further contact with these churches and are much more informed and involved than we are. We should wait for the outcome of that contact. The Committee proposed to set up a library fund for these two brothers. Once these brothers are back in Indonesia it will be very hard for them to add to their libraries. Good Reformed material would be very valuable for these Indonesian churches. The consistory accepted this proposal and the fund is well established by now. We have received inquiries from members of neighbouring churches as to how they could contribute to this fund. The purpose of this message is to give everyone a chance to contribute for this very worthwhile cause. You may send your contributions (payable to “Timor Library Fund”) to:

Timor Library Fund
PO Box 85158,
Brant Plaza Postal Outlet,
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4



Thoughts on Spiritual Growth

Commenting on J.I. Packer's book *Growing in Christ*, Rev. J. van der Jagt, writing in *Una Sancta*, has passed on a number of comments that were made on the book by Rev. J. Burger in the Dutch periodical *Nader Bekeken*. Since Packer works in Canada and is known to many of our readers, these comments might be of interest to our people. Burger begins by giving a positive review of many aspects of Packer's book, and he suggests that it presents us with a style of writing that is easy to read, and speaks to the modern situation in human life. But he also voices his criticism against the position Packer takes on a number of points. Here follow the remarks of Rev. Burger, with headings as supplied by Rev. J. Van der Jagt:

Criticism

On the basis of what I have written one could think that I find *Growing in Christ* a good book. Unfortunately, that is not the case. True, it contains many good points, but at the same time you regularly meet passages which make you put big question marks beside them, or to which you have to say a straightforward "No." I will give a few examples.

Creation or evolution

Packer writes about Gen. 1 and 2 (p. 35): "It is arguable how much (or how little) Genesis 1 and 2 tell us about the method of creation – whether, for instance, they do or do not rule out the idea of physical organisms evolving through epochs of thousands of years. What is clear however, is that their main aim is to tell us not how the world was made, but who made it." But in this way you place too little emphasis on the question of the historical truth of Gen. 1 and 2 (definitely of Gen. 2 from verse 4 onwards, where the real history begins).

Descended into hell

The chapter that deals with Christ descending into hell (especially p. 56) is also worth mentioning. Packer here defends the ancient Greek and Roman belief that Jesus, by His death, saved the Old Testament believers from Sheol, the realm of death, and brought them to paradise. But this is something that has always been rejected by the Reformed theologians. Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Elijah and Lazarus were with God in His glory already before Christ's death (cf. Heb. 11:5; Luke 9:30 and 16:22; see also Calvin's Institutes II/XVI/9).

Ascension

We have to put big question marks behind what Packer says about the ascension "Ascended is, of course, a word-picture implying exaltation (going up) to a condition of supreme dignity and power," (p. 64). The ascension is a sign "of which the message reads: Jesus the Saviour reigns!" (p. 64). This undermines our faith in Christ's body entering into heaven (cf. Heb. 10:20) as a pledge of our body gaining entrance to God's glory (cf. Heid. Cat. q. and a. 49).

Although Packer therefore defends the historical trustworthiness of the virgin birth and of Easter, he places the facts of ascension in doubt.

The church

Remarkable is also what Packer says about the church. On p.77 he says: "so long as the dominical sacraments are administered and ministerial oversight is exercised, no organisational norms are insisted on at all." As if the Bible teaches us nothing about elders and deacons.

Communion of saints

At the same time it strikes you that Packer will not direct the words "the

communion of saints" so much at the fellowship of the church members with each other, the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2), but at the real union in Christ of the church "militant here on earth" with the church triumphant. This is connected with the fact that Packer speaks about the church especially as a spiritual unity; he considers that to speak about a structural organization is more Roman than Scriptural: "disorderly vigour in a congregation is infinitely preferable to a correct and tidy deadness," (p. 77). As if this is a true dilemma; as if Paul doesn't say: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33).

Justification

"Justification is," according to Packer, "final, being a decision on which God will never go back." We could agree with this to a certain extent (justification as a state, e.g. C. of D. v, 6). But according to Packer, the consequence of this is that we do not really have to ask for forgiveness of sins any more. That is shown when he discusses the fifth petition (p. 191ff.). Packer says there: and though the daily failures of the children of God "do not overthrow their justification, things will not be right between them and their Father till they have said 'sorry' and asked him to overlook the ways they have let him down." But if praying for forgiveness is no more than saying "sorry" to God (in fact all has been forgiven already) then you miss the depth of Ps. 51 and 130 completely. This shrivels up our prayer for mercy and compassion, with all its consequences for our everyday life of faith.

Baptism

Finally, I have much trouble with Packer's exposition of baptism. In

the first place I find him – although he also says some good things here – rather vague in connection with baptism, and it seems as if his argumentation does not get off the ground. When you start asking yourself why that is so, you discover that Packer does not have a clear view of God’s covenant. That is the result of not making a choice between the Baptist’s adult baptism and the Christian infant baptism. For, according to Packer, “one of the church’s unhappy decisions concerns the subject of baptism,” (p. 131). Packer is deeply sorry about this and says (p. 133): “For infant baptist and adult baptist groups to work together in mutual respect should never be hard, because biblically and pastorally the two practices are (thanks to God) parallel in their meaning.”

We would like to stress that it is very much of great pastoral importance that the lambs legally belong to the flock of Christ, and that therefore the children of believers are, and should be, baptised. This is not a theoretical matter, this touches the heart of the Christian congregation. It is moreover of great doctrinal importance to put matters clearly here. If you mix things up here, and you want to keep infant and adult baptists as friends, then you will end up with a vague and illogical story about baptism. Packer aligns himself very clearly here with those of the evangelical persuasion who consider matters of baptism not worthy of church division.

We must say a heart-felt “No” to this. Between Baptist thought and biblical teaching about covenant and baptism there remains a chasm which is unbridgeable. Precisely on the matter of baptism I find Packer’s book lacking in scriptural-reformed thought.

Omissions

Apart from (sometimes quite forceful) criticism about some parts of Packer’s book, I also have questions regarding certain subjects which – remarkably, I think – have not been dealt with. Of course it is difficult to have criticism about something a person has “not” written about. Especially in a book such as *Growing in Christ*, which only provides “short, sharp bursts” on topics.

You can never expect such a book to discuss everything. Yet there

are certain subjects I very much miss. Firstly, Holy Supper. Packer wishes to identify himself with the old church tradition regarding catechetical instruction. But if you do that, then you must also discuss the Holy Supper. Then you are truly in the line of catechism-instruction of the church. However, Packer does discuss baptism, but not the supper of the Lord. That makes the second chapter of Packer’s book (already the weakest in the whole book) even more unsatisfactory. As well, it is remarkable that Packer, in his discussion of the Apostles’ creed, pays no attention to the words “sitting at the right hand of God,” nor to the sentence “from where He shall come to judge the living and the dead.” You ask yourself why this is so. Is this pure coincidence or is there more to it? Does Packer wish to avoid any discussions with adherents of the “millennium” doctrine (certainly a contentious subject in America)? And why no mention of the judgment (and about hell)? The book gives no answer to these questions, but matters have been omitted here which clearly do belong to basic catechism instruction. That concerns especially the judgment: “eternal judgment definitely belongs” – see Heb. 6: 2 – to the basis of Christian instruction?!

Absorbing

Therefore you can, and must criticize Packer, and as far as I am concerned, you need not ask him to come to Holland (or to Australia, v.d.J.) as an “apostle to the heathen.” You must admit, though, that you can learn from his manner of speaking and writing. He is true-to-life, has a wide cultural horizon, deep knowledge of the Bible and talks, writes and preaches with humour and wisdom: “straight from the shoulder.”

Conclusion

In *Growing in Christ* Packer has written a book which contains good things especially in the third and fourth sections namely about the Lord’s prayer and the ten commandments. Moreover, the book has a multi-dimensional aspect in that – in contrast to so many other doctrinal books doctrine, prayer and ethics are discussed in one book. It is also true to life and written from the heart, using many Bible texts and contexts.



ACCEPTED to Ancaster, ON

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
of Taber, AB

* * *

DECLINED to Coaldale, AB

Rev. J. Vanwoudenberg
of Watford, ON

* * *

Classis Ontario South has declared

br. R. Pot
and
br. S. t’Hart

eligible for call. Their numbers are as follows:

Stephen t’Hart: 905-648-6649
(email: ag688@hwcn.org)

Richard Pot: 905-387-2172
(email: af350@hwcn.org)

Yet at the same time there are so many points which deserve criticism that I would not like to give this book to someone else as an “orthodox” present. It is for example definitely not suitable as a present to someone doing public profession of faith. If you wish to use it as a study book (e.g. for “prep study” for Bible study clubs or for catechism instruction to adults) you would have to do so under expert guidance, a guidance which is able to handle the weak or plainly wrong, passages in Packer’s book as a challenge to put something positive over against them. Moreover you would need to have the capacity to (almost completely) rewrite the second section regarding baptism.

These are the Dutch comments, and I agree with them entirely.

We can only echo the sentiments of Rev. J. van der Jagt. Burger has give some valuable critical attention to Packer’s book, which can only be beneficial for those using Packer’s material. And we can thank the Dutch and the Australian connections for bringing us up to date on one of our local theologians!



Do you send your children to a Christian school so they will learn how to become worldly Christians?

Somewhat of a strange question, you might think. Aren't worldly Christians those who are not able to withstand the temptations of the world, like the seed that fell among the thorns? Understood in this manner, the answer to this odd question can be quite simple and short: no.

I'd like to approach it differently, though. This question is the second part of one that came from one of our readers. On an earlier occasion I shared some thoughts about how to help our children become Christians in the world. I wrote that, in order for a family and a school to function well, they need to provide a nurturing, safe, environment in which parents and educators and children can live and work together in a relationship of trust and harmony. Within such a setting, the children are to learn from the adults how to deal with the questions of life. These last four words are the focus now: children must learn how to deal with the questions of life.

We often hear it said about the environment in which our children grow up: wait till you find yourself in the real world; then you will really discover what life is all about. I guess the implication of this statement is that living in a Christian home, attending a Christian school, is not considered part of the real world: it's too protective, too safe, too idealistic. Our homes, and certainly our schools, provide our children with a greenhouse environment, it is claimed. Once our children get out "there," they will find themselves ill prepared for the societal pressures brought to bear on them. What are we to think of such comments?

We can readily admit that no type of education will prepare for all the issues of life that we may possibly face. Surely, preparation for life does NOT mean that we have memorized all possible answers to all possible questions.

Education deals in practical things, but much more so in things of principle. In the home, father and mother instill into their children principles, values, standards – a life style. This will include a strong emphasis on personal responsibility – one of the main goals of Reformed education. Christian adults are called upon to make responsible choices, and children are to learn from them how to do this eventually on their own. Our reader wrote about his own experience as a Christian student in a public school.

I remember incidents of ridicule for saying "Christian" things as a young child in a secular environment. This ridicule came not only from my classmates, but from the teacher also. My parents would often remind me of what I was while in school: I was to be a "stranger" there; I was to be an example. I should not hide my light under a bushel . . .

In our Christian schools there ought not to be such ridicule; the light of God's Word ought to shine brightly in the hallways and classrooms. But, our young people might think, if there is already so much light, you won't see much of my tiny candle, will you now? Whatever I do will make precious little difference. And if I do try . . .

Is this perhaps the problem we face in our families and in our schools: the tiny, often hesitant, lights of our children have little chance to make a difference since they are always overshadowed by the lights of the adults. After all, the adults know best, and we all are Christians anyway . . . Are we, despite our good intent, educating our children into docile (there's no need to take a stand), or perhaps incompetent (we don't know how to take a stand) young Christians?

Human beings are inclined to choose the road with the least resis-

tance: we'd rather be lazy than active; we'd rather let others do the work and sit back ourselves. If that would be our attitude, we would live our lives as docile, lazy Christians, taking things as they come without any attempt to make a difference. Then our spiritual lights will fade. Our religious life becomes routine and ritual, without the fire of commitment burning brightly. Christian behaviour will then become no more than icing on the cake, perhaps merely to satisfy parents. Eventually, for us the antithesis between church and world will be obliterated.

However, in combating such an attitude we ought not to build the wall of antithesis so high and thick that world and church can never interact – don't taste, don't touch, don't become involved. Any desire to create some contact with "the world" is considered with deep suspicion. We become introvert, inward looking, a community that exists as a lonely island in the midst of an ocean of depraved humanity. The Pharisees had precise rules for a religious life style. To them it was quite clear what was permitted and what was not. Their main responsibility was to follow the set rules. Then came our Lord and Saviour, who challenged this view at every turn, pointing to the responsibility that each one has to live from the heart rather than because of the rule. He did not come to lead His people to unassailable isolation; He placed us right in the middle of a challenging world, and He gave us the means to stand up to all those challenges – not in our own strength, but with the armoury which He Himself provides. In this manner we are to live and work in the world.

A Christian school is, of course, a place where students are encouraged to apply their Christian beliefs in all school subjects. But a Christian school is also a place where inimical, non-biblical,

thoughts are NOT shunned as irrelevant to Christian education. A program of studies that does not show how it derives from soundly Scriptural principles is as inadequate as a program of studies that does not relate to real life issues and concerns.

Here lies the challenge of Christian education for the home and for the school: how shall we provide our children with real opportunities to learn to discern? Sure, there is a time when it is appropriate for a mother to say: Just listen to me, I know best. Yet, education is much more than providing good advice. Every generation needs opportunities to discover for itself what values are enduring and what behaviours are truly appropriate. No one can live our lives for us; nothing teaches as powerfully as our own experiences, successes and failures included. Give us some examples, you ask?

- Discuss with your children and students issues which emerge from the newspaper and TV programs. Do not say too easily: you should not read this book, or you should not watch this program. Challenge your children whether or why they ought to read this book or watch that program. Model discernment-in-action and be prepared for the challenges of your children. There are situations where a firm “no” is required, but there are also many situations in which children ought to be given space to make their own choices without the adults stamping all over them to show them the errors of their ways. Keeping in mind, of course, the age of your children, honestly help your children develop their own opinions, always grounded in Scriptural principles. Trust that Christ also lives in their hearts, and that they want to be obedient to His will.
- Admit that not all of life’s questions have ready answers. We often do not know either what to do or what to decide. Let’s not pretend that adults are infallible and above reproach! Some teachers seem to believe that they MUST have all the correct answers. Such attitudes do nothing to help students become discerning Christians. In fact, we may cause them to become frustrated with their elders, noting the many inconsistencies in adult behaviour, and rejecting the values that are preached to them.

- Don’t be afraid – let alone upset – when your teachers introduce controversial topics and issues. There is much value in opening the eyes and minds of the students to questions raised in secular novels and in non-Christian approaches to history and science. Train your children in careful analysis of ideas and views, also those that contradict Scripture. Trust the teachers to guide their students towards Scripturally independent thinking. Our selection procedures should not focus on determining whether a book is “Christian” or not. Instead, it should focus on instructional potential. Of course, there

In a biblical learning environment neither the parent nor the teacher is the all-knowing answering machine, they themselves know full well how confusing, frustrating, even painful learning and living can be . . .

are books and topics that are better not read or discussed because our students will not gain anything from them. Much depends on the age, the interests, the needs, etc. of the children, as wise parents and teachers know so well. A book with controversial themes can become a powerful and enjoyable experience under the guidance of a discerning, loving teacher.

- Create opportunities for your children to interact with those living around them – how else will they be able to let their light shine? No, do not neglect the friends within the school and church community. But neither ignore the people in your own neighbourhood. Unorganized, spontaneous, street play can provide a refreshing perspective on our self awareness. Participation in

sports activities or other events often stimulates our children as well. Teach them how to be clear and up front about what they will and will not participate in. Also as school communities there are opportunities to participate in regional events of one sort or another.

* * *

Do we send our children to a Christian school in order to learn how to become – not worldly perhaps, but – world-wise Christians? The answer can be yes if it means that we want our children and students to be familiar with the ways of the world; that’s the place where we all live and work; that’s the stage for the drama of human lives. Indeed, there is much drama, much tragedy. Attempting to hide this from our children is foolish. The Bible sets a much better example. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 are human beings, sketched in Scripture with all their faults, shortcomings, warts and ugliness. Faith did not remove the ills of life, nor the effects of sin; faith gave them a new robe as white as wool, as scarlet as the most royal garment because Christ bought them free. Scripture speaks of these things as a struggle, not as an achievement. It is our task as adults to help our children in and with this struggle because it is also our own struggle.

Our homes need discerning Christian parents and our schools need discerning Christian teachers who know how to create a biblical environment for the youngsters. In such an environment, neither the parent nor the teacher is the all-knowing answering machine. They themselves are deeply aware how confusing learning and living can be, how frustrating, how painful at times, and how their own efforts to educate in the fear of the Lord fall so far short all the time. Yet the parent and teacher are also the older brother or sister who can comfort the younger ones, encourage them, protect them when needed, let them go when they’re ready.

Parents . . . teachers . . . are you actively involved in your own in-service training?

* * *

Please address questions directly to:
Mr. T.M.P. Vandervan
Covenant College
856 Upper James St., Box 20179
Hamilton, ON, L9C 7M5
e-mail: tmpvdp@hookup.net



Spring 1997 Ministers' Workshop

On Monday, May 26, 1997, a number of ministers in Ontario gathered for the Spring Ministers' Workshop. It was an excellent day of mutual instruction and fellowship. For the morning address, Dr. N.H. Gootjes (Professor of Dogmatology at the Theological College) introduced the Presbyterian Churches in Korea from a historical perspective. He described five phases from the inception of lasting Christian mission in 1880 to the eventual formation of four different Presbyterian churches. He highlighted the hand of God that permitted the first missionaries to spread the gospel in this isolated culture at the end of the last century; he touched on the Nevius method of mission and evangelism which Christ used to quickly establish His church in Korea; he identified several formative his-

torical events, such as what is sometimes known as the "Korean Pentecost of 1907" and the infamous General Assembly of 1938 and the struggles over the following decades that divided the Presbyterian Church of Korea. The peculiar history of this church served to reveal the struggles, strengths and particular character of our sister churches in Korea in a very sympathetic way.

The afternoon address was prepared by Rev. J. de Gelder, minister of the church of Smithville. "Help me! I Appeal." was the title of his introduction. It dealt with the famous Article 31 of the Church Order. In his introductory remarks, he observed that as a federation of churches, we regard this article as very precious, and yet, appeals are rarely a welcome item on the agenda of a major assembly, and appellants are often frus-

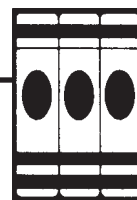
trated because it is unclear what a major assembly requires to hear an appeal, or because the major assembly judges admissibility in an inconsistent fashion. In dealing with this matter, we discovered, for instance, that historically, major assemblies have usually attempted to reconcile two parties before judging an appeal. Many recommendations and suggestions (some of them quite far-reaching) were made, discussed and appeared to have great merit.

Naturally, much more could be said about the two addresses. Much more too could be said about the fellowship which we enjoyed. The hope was expressed at the conclusion of the conference that both addresses would be published for the benefit of others as well. Look for it.

Paul Aasman, convenor 

BOOK REVIEW

by Catharine Mechelse



Probable Sons

Amy Le Feuvre, *Probable Sons*. Neerlandia, AB: Inheritance Publications, 1996. Softcover, 94 pag. with illustrations. \$ 6.95 Can; \$ 5.90 U.S.


"Children! They are a nuisance to everyone, my abomination as you know. . . . Why on earth they cannot be kept out of sight altogether till they reach a sensible age is what puzzles me!" is the opening paragraph of *Probable Sons*. It is the story of a young Christian girl named Millicent, who is orphaned and is sent to live with her worldly bachelor uncle who has wandered from his Christian upbringing. Millicent, whose only companion is her uncle's dog lives a lonely existence in a large imposing mansion with an uncle who does not want to be saddled with an orphaned niece. The child touches the lives of sev-

eral people to which she relates the parable of the prodigal son, which she mispronounces as the "probable son." Through her example of simple Christian belief, and the sustaining love for her heavenly Father, as well as a series of adventures which involves her and her uncle she helps the prodigal uncle return to the fold.

Probable Sons is a simple story written by Amy Le Feuvre in 1905. Not much is known about the author except that she was born in England, lived in city called Blackheath and died in 1929. Le Feuvre wrote many children's stories with moral and Christian values, some of which she wrote for the Religious Tract Society.

Although the story leans heavily on the formula of a young child influencing an adult's life and thereby causing

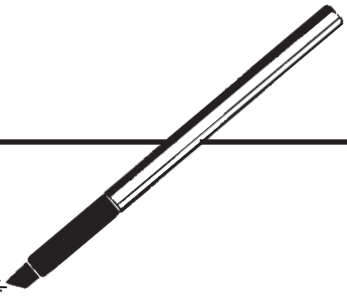
him to repent and return to the fold, this simple story is easy reading and will give pleasure to young readers. A drawback to this story is that the target readership of 7 - 10 years of age may find it a bit too simple to satisfy today's more mature tastes. This story though is very suitable to be read by parents to young children who cannot yet read. The book has easy to read print and several illustrations which are of an earlier time period, although they have not been reproduced very well. On the whole the book is well put together, although the cover picture somewhat obscures the title. Inheritance Publications has also printed several other titles by the same author.

Catharine Mechelse is Administrative Assistant at the Theological College. 

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



The church at Aldergrove, BC with gratitude sees an ever growing number of young people. In his "Life in the Family" Rev. Boersma reflects on this: "As church we should think now already about the involvement of our young people in the life of the church. A number of suggestions were made at the meeting as to how we could involve our young people. Some of the items mentioned in the council meeting were: diaconal help (yard work for home bound people etc.), the appointment of a youth coordinator, some involvement of young people in the church service, and post-confession class. These are some of the areas we could look at, but this is all very preliminary." Council feels the young people themselves should be involved in the discussions about these matters.

The church at Langley, BC asked the neighbouring churches for feedback on their plan to conduct weekly devotionals and bi-monthly worship services, including the administration of the Lord's Supper, at Manoah Manor (a home for senior citizens). Generally this is well received. However, the concern of some churches appears to be that also some others of different reformed backgrounds may attend the table. Langley's proposal includes a protocol for such situations.

In the council of the same church they reviewed a previous decision "to enter into occasional pulpit exchange (speaking an edifying word)" with the Abbotsford Free Reformed Church. It was decided to proceed with this arrangement.

One wonders if the rules for political involvement by churches are different in Australia than in Canada. The Church Bulletin of the Albany region urges the members to vote for two specific candidates and even gives a list of

members who are on the electoral roll. To my understanding the Canadian rule is that a church, as a charitable organization, may not promote any particular political party. Perhaps they have more liberty in Australia!

"Why stop studying God's Word in the summer time?" is the question asked in a Vernon, BC, bulletin. One of the Bible Study Groups decided they will continue through the summer, be it with fewer meetings than usual. Not a bad idea!

The churches of Classis Pacific, a total of twelve, are studying a report to divide the classis into two. The problem is a lack of a natural geographical division. Surely, ways will be found to make these assemblies a more manageable and efficient size.

In Tasmania a number of members have initiated to hold "Prayer Meetings" fortnightly on Friday evenings, which initiative was welcomed by the consistory. "The format is to pray for 4 specific "prayer points" each evening, accompanied by short break of relevant Scriptural meditation and occasional song." Reference is made to Ephesians 6:18. A sample of such prayer points is the following list: Consistory work – elders, MERF (Rev. Atallah, work by volunteers and broadcasting), Remembrance Day, Study and use of the Bible.

In more than one congregation there is a concern about the lack of organists. In Burlington West they decided to do a bit more than just be concerned about it. The Organ Committee "is looking for up to 4 members with some experience with playing organ or piano to come forward. Council is prepared to cover the cost of lessons if they show themselves serious about striving to play organ for our worship services."

PRESS RELEASE



Classis Ontario North held at Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-East, June 13, 1997

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening Church of Burlington-West, Rev. G.H. Visscher calls the meeting to order. He requests the delegates to sing Ps. 63:1, 2, reads Hosea 11, and leads in prayer. He wel-

comes the brothers present and shares with the meeting the joyous tidings that the night before the Council of the Church at Burlington-West unanimously agreed to divide the congregation into two Churches and go to Classis for approbation of this decision according to Art. 40 C.O.

2. Examination of Credentials

The delegates of the Church at Burlington-South report that the creden-

tials are found in good order and that all Churches are duly represented; of the Churches of Elora and Toronto the alternate delegates are present.

3. Constitution of Classis

Classis is constituted. Classis accepts the suggested officers as moderamen for this Classis:
chairman: Rev. G. Nederveen;
clerk: Rev. P.G. Feenstra;
vice-chairman: Rev. W. den Hollander.

The chairman thanks the convening Church for its preparations of Classis. In his opening words he remembers the fact that the Church of Elora was saddened by a sudden death of one of its children due to an accident (because of which the Rev. J.G. Slaa is absent). He observes that the Church at Chatsworth is now seated as the Owen Sound Can. Ref. Church. As far as the work of calling is concerned, he notes that the Rev. Feenstra declined the call to Carman, the Church of Fergus saw the call extended to Rev. J. Ludwig declined, and the Church of Orangeville received a decline from Rev. J. Moesker. Finally, the chairman mentions the farewell trip which the Versteegs made to Irian Jaya, and the fact that Rev. Versteeg now is eligible for call.

After a few additions the Agenda is adopted.

4. Reports

Classis proceeds to the discussion of a report submitted by a Committee which Classis Ontario North of June 14, 1996 appointed for "The Review of Delegation to Major Assemblies." The recommendations from the Committee are discussed and voted on one by one, and defeated. The Committee is thanked for its work and for its report.

Classis received two Church Visitation reports of visits made to the Church at Guelph and at Brampton. The chairman expresses gratitude for these reports.

5. Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.

The Churches of Burlington-East and Elora request advice in matters of discipline and governance of the Church. Advice is given.

6. Proposals and Instructions

The Church of Burlington-West request Classis approbation according to Art. 40 C.O. for its decision to divide the present Church into two Churches, viz. the Can. Ref. Church of Flamborough and the Can. Ref. Church of Waterdown as of September 7, 1997. The material submitted for this request is read and discussed, after which Classis grants the request with much gratitude for this blessed development. In gratitude Classis sings Ps. 133.

The Churches of Fergus and Orangeville request the Classis Churches to assist them in supplying ministers to fill the pulpit. Their request is granted and arrangements are facilitated.

7. Appeals

After lunch roll call is held. Classis then proceeds to deal with an appeal of the Church of Burlington-South against Burlington-East's unilateral decision to change the long-standing agreement and policy concerning the boundaries among the Burlington Churches. Classis accedes to the request of Burlington-South.

8. Appointments

The following appointments are made:

- a) convening Church next Classis: Elora
- b) date: September 12, 1997
- c) suggested officers:
 - Rev. A.J. Pol, Chairman;
 - Rev. G. Nederveen, clerk;
 - Rev. P.G. Feenstra, vice-chairman

9. Personal Question Period

The Revs. G.H. Visscher and P. Aasman share their joy concerning the NIV Committee's decision to rescind plans for the publication of a gender-inclusive translation.

10. Censure ad Art. 34 C.O.

The chairman concludes with thankfulness that censure ad Art. 34 C.O. is not necessary.

11. Press Release and Acts

The Press Release is read and approved. The acts are read and adopted.

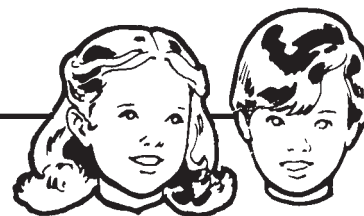
12. Closing

The chairman requests Classis to sing Ps. 63:3. He leads in prayer and thanksgiving and closes Classis.

For Classis,
Rev. W. den Hollander,
vice chairman at that time.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers:

Another year is almost over for your schools. This means that, the Lord willing, you will go one grade higher, most students to a new teacher. I hope you have enjoyed your year with all the other students in your class. Have an enjoyable few weeks which are left of your school year.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Tanya Meints	1	Melanie Spanninga	17
Rebecca Kruisselbrink	6	Jocelyn Schoon	22
Gregory Spriensma	7	Deborah Verhorst	24
Felicia Oosterhoff	8	Twyla van Leeuwen	25
Lee-Anne Vanderwoerd	9	Reuel Feenstra	27
Eric Vanderriendt	12	Bonita Feenstra	27
Mary Ellen Van Doornik	14	Renee Kruisselbrink	29
Jason vander Horst	16	Lindsey North	29
Jennifer Post	16	Lori Oosterhoff	30

Quiz Time!

A SCRAMBLED KITCHEN

By Busy Beaver *Emily Buikema*

oetvs	_____	ltpea	_____
apn	_____	plpea	_____
rkof	_____	vneo	_____
osnop	_____	odfo	_____
ocko	_____	icthkne	_____
finkie	_____	tunslies	_____
eoasngr	_____		
raedb	_____		

PUZZLE

By Busy Beaver *Jacqueline Jager*

A X	F \	K	P	U
B =	G	L	Q	V
C *	H	M	R	W
D □	I	N	S	X
E //	J	O	T O	Y -
				Z

ANIMALS WORDSEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Jamie Schuurman*

T P I G E E Z S A E C B E
A O C F I D C A T Y H E M
A I D H W H K F I N D J O
G F L O L A F B B G B Q U
E O L I G T R O B T A O S
X F H B L U E J A Y F I E
F F S Q M R B B R D O O J
F P P K O J O L S O B C A
O H A M N T J C T X B L T
D F R E K J Q O M P N I B
H O R S E J O W E U G O N
U F O X Y U P F Z E L N L
F H W I I S P O R T H I J

Find:
dog
cat
rabbit
horse
wolf
fox
monkey
mouse
bluejay
robin
tiger
lion
pig
cow

PUZZLE

By Busy Beaver *Carling North*

A	F #	K	P	U
B	G	L	Q	V
C	H	M	R	W
D	I	N	S	X
E	J	O	T	Y
				Z

BIBLE WORDSEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Jamie-Lynn Schutten*

G F J T Q P K X A Y B R C I B H G
Z S R U M M N G F Z J T S O O E P
Y X I T R B O H V M L K Z D N F Q
W S F V U L A W I L C A M X D E O
B A R N K C J P E O P L E N M P Q
I O G Z B O O P T Q R S V X L B K
B O T S B S C H R I S T U T I D J
L E P E R E H L A N S Y Z W G H E
E C B T A H U C K F J M A R Y F C
V S T Y S G R E I G I D S T Z F A
O G W X R F C B L H N Q O U B Z Y
A E U I H Q H O J T M P R C V C W
E F I L O P R T S L K T O I Y D X
R M M N K D J A U X L T S E J E U
T X J P E T E R V Z O B J H A R Q
S U Z N L M S W R Y A V Y U D P S
P V N B A I U Q X P W X Z A K T C
Q Y X O F K S H E P H E R D L X W
E G W H J D P O C R T S Q N M O V

Find:

Baptism	Christ	Peter	Bible
Jesus	Mary	Shepherd	Leper
Barn	People	Lord	



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jacqueline Jager*. Thank you for your letter and puzzle you sent to me. Do you enjoy it in Grade 4? Do you like Miss Wilderdyk for your teacher? Bye for now, *Jacqueline*.

Thank you for your letter, *Becca Brasz*. Do you like school, in Grade 2?

I think Lizz the Lizard would be fun to play with. Kittens do grow fast, don't they. Bye, *Becca*.

Hi, *Angela Brasz*. Did you enjoy having McDonalds for your sister's birthday? You must have plenty of lizards in your house now, with four of you getting a lizard. Fortunately, Erin received a duck, so that's a bit of a change. Bye now.

Hello, *Jessica*. You are in Grade 2 now, but you didn't write your surname. It's good to see that God is the first whom you love. He is the most important in all our lives. Thank you for your lovely picture. I'm sure I enjoyed the cake we are eating on the table! Bye now.

Answers: *A Scrambled Kitchen*

apple, oven, food, kitchen, utensils, stove, pan, fork, spoon, cook, knife, oranges, bread, plate,

Love,
Aunt Betty

